



County of San Luis Obispo, California

# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

## COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Parks and Recreation Department / Nick Franco, 781-5204

**SUBJECT:** Piedras Blancas California Coastal National Monument Initiative

**DATE:** October 15, 2015

**RECOMMENDATION:** It is recommended that the Commission receive the presentation about the Piedras Blancas California Coastal National Monument Initiative, provide a letter of support, and recommend support of the initiative by the Board of Supervisors.

### DISCUSSION:

The Piedras Blancas California Coastal National Monument Initiative is a joint campaign by two 501(c)(3) organizations within San Luis Obispo County: the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association (PBLSA) and the Friends of the Elephant Seal (FES). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owns and manages the 20 acre historic Piedras Blancas Light Station. California State Parks (CSP) owns and operates the surrounding 424 acres within Hearst San Simeon State Park. The total 444 acres of land are co-managed by both agencies under a Cooperative Agreement signed in 2011 and amended in 2013. Under a provision of the 2008 Consolidated Natural Resources Act, the entire 440 acres is designated as the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area.

Additionally, BLM also manages the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM). The CCNM was designated in 2000 and expanded in 2014 to include more than 20,000 rocks, islands, exposed reefs, and pinnacles along the 1,100 mile California coastline and 1,665 acres of public land onshore in the Point Arena area.

The County Parks and Recreation Element (PRE) identifies the provision of tours, elephant seal viewing, beach access, nature appreciation, and parking as existing park and recreation resources. The PRE further supports the implementation of Joint Use Agreements and identifies the need for completion of the California Coastal Trail, the preservation of sensitive habitats, and the provision of passive recreation.

Senate Bill 1971, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act, has been introduced into Congress for consideration. The bill includes a provision to elevate the status of the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area to be included as part of the onshore land included in the California Coastal National Monument.

The location provides a dramatic and important shoreline connection to the ocean and provides a significant opportunity to contrast the way land and sea connections are important to two mammals: humans and elephant seals. The human land and sea connection in the area includes the recreational uses of both the beach (walking, picnic, beachcombing) and the sea (kayaking, surfing, fishing, swimming). The elephant seal use of the land and sea connection includes the use of the beach for birthing, nursing, breeding, molting and resting and using the sea for eating and living.



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Support for the initiative includes:

- Cambria Community Services District
- Northern Chumash Tribal Council
- San Simeon Community Services District
- Local Lions and Rotary Clubs
- Ten Local Chambers of Commerce

The intent of the initiative is to enhance funding opportunities to manage the area, promote the development of the California Coastal Trail in the area, encourage further preservation and restoration of the light station, and support the tourism base in the North Coast area.

Support of Senate Bill 1971, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act, will further these goals, is consistent with the Parks and Recreation Element, and is supported by many local organizations. No local opposition is apparent.

### **Attachments:**

- Senate Bill 1971
- PBLSA Support Letter
- FES Support Letter
- CCNM Initiative Support Letter
- BLM Testimony at Senate Hearing
- Draft Commission Letter of Support